

THOMAS REID

ON
SOCIETY
AND
POLITICS



Edited by
Knud Haakonssen
and
Paul Wood

THOMAS REID ON SOCIETY AND POLITICS

PAPERS AND LECTURES

EDITED BY

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THOMAS REID ON SOCIETY AND POLITICS

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1 *Thomas Reid on the Animate Creation: Papers Relating to the Life Sciences*, Paul Wood (ed.) 1995.

2 *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, Derek R. Brookes (ed.) 1997 (hardback), 2000 (paperback).

3 *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, Derek R. Brookes and Knud Haakonssen (eds) 2002.

4 *The Correspondence of Thomas Reid*, Paul Wood (ed.) 2002.

5 *Thomas Reid on Logic, Rhetoric and the Fine Arts: Papers on the Culture of the Mind*, Alexander Broadie (ed.) 2004.

6 *Thomas Reid on Practical Ethics*, Knud Haakonssen (ed.) 2007.

7 *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*, Knud Haakonssen and James A. Harris (eds) 2010.

8 *Thomas Reid on Society and Politics*, Knud Haakonssen and Paul Wood (eds) 2015.

9 *Thomas Reid on Mathematics and Natural Philosophy*, Paul Wood (ed.).

10 *Thomas Reid and the University*, Alexander Broadie and Paul Wood (eds).

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Erfurt and Victoria

January 2014

The Manuscripts and Editorial Principles

The manuscripts that we have transcribed and publish in this volume belong to the Special Collections Centre in the Sir Duncan Rice Library, University of Aberdeen. Most of the manuscripts are part of the Birkwood Collection, while the remainder are found in a significant collection of Reid's papers given to the Library in 1980. Details of the physical state of each manuscript and authorial revisions and annotations are given in the Textual Notes. All of the manuscripts in the Birkwood Collection have been digitised and are available on the website of the Library (http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/historic/Thomas_Reid).

It appears that Reid himself organised his papers thematically, for among the manuscripts now located in the bundle MS 2131/4/III/12–23c there is an uncatalogued wrapper labelled 'Politicks' in Reid's hand. This wrapper was used to keep together the papers related to Reid's politics lectures now found in the MS 2131/4/III/1–23c sequence. After Reid's death, his colleague George Jardine arranged all of the surviving manuscripts into ten topical groups, and the wrappers for these ten parcels are now kept in the box containing the manuscripts catalogued as MS 2131/8/I–VII. The wrappers themselves are uncatalogued. A transcription of them will be published in volume 10 of the Edinburgh Edition of Thomas Reid. In addition to the original wrappers there is an equivalent set created in the nineteenth or twentieth century. This second set of wrappers has labels written in ink that are transcriptions of Jardine's labels affixed to the original wrappers. Despite these efforts to arrange the manuscripts into topical groups, the thematic ordering of Reid's papers has in fact been significantly disturbed at various points, so that their catalogued order in many cases bears little relationship to their original intellectual order. Moreover, Reid himself reworked material with revisions, deletions, insertions and additions written in margins or inter-lined in the original text. He also used blank parts of paper for miscellaneous notes of little or no relevance to the original text of the document. His writing paper was typically a sheet that was folded and refolded to form an approximately octavo-sized quire of four leaves held together with a small string (which often has broken, leaving the leaves free to migrate elsewhere or be lost entirely). All these factors conspire to make our reconstruction of Reid's lectures on politics subject to some uncertainty

and to leave several gaps in it. We can only confirm what George Jardine wrote on the label of the relevant bundle (Wrapper B):

This Parcel Contains Heads of Lectures on Pneumatology, Ethicks & Politicks which seem to have been delivered the first Session Dr. Reid Taught in Glasgow College. To which so many additional Notes & Illustrations have been made in Succeeding years that they cannot easily be put in exact order.

The papers that Reid presented to the Aberdeen Philosophical Society and the Glasgow Literary Society, included in Part Three of this volume, pose less of an editorial challenge than his lecture notes that make up Part Two. While not in all cases without problems for modern editors, these papers were sufficiently polished to be read aloud. The reading notes transcribed in Part One are the least problematic from an editorial point of view, even though they sometimes raise serious issues of interpretation.

Our aim in transcribing the manuscripts included in this volume has been to provide accurate and easily readable texts, while preserving the integrity of Reid's writing. Because most of the manuscripts contain numerous deletions, insertions, corrections and the like, the creation of such texts is not a straightforward process. We have therefore adopted the following principles in order to achieve our editorial end:

1. We have made no attempt to normalise Reid's erratic spelling and punctuation, except where the spelling was clearly mistaken or its eccentricity too distracting.

2. In our transcriptions, words or characters which are missing because of damage to the manuscript or are judged to have been inadvertently omitted by Reid are enclosed thus: '< >'. Illegible letters or words are indicated thus: '<?>'.
 3. Any characters written as superscripts are here printed not raised.

4. In Reid's manuscripts, he typically overlines for emphasis, and we have reproduced the relevant words or passages in italics without editorial comment.

5. We have silently normalised Reid's contractions and abbreviations where no modern equivalent exists, or where they are not self-explanatory or readily pronounceable by the modern reader. Thus, on page 3, line 1, we have not expanded 'Aug' because it is still recognised as an abbreviation for 'August', but on the next line we have normalised Reid's contraction 'Cha' because it does not obviously stand for 'Charles'. We have also silently expanded some of Reid's contractions in the interests of readability. For example, on page 3, line 6, we have normalised Reid's 'Art' to 'Article' because it occurs in a reading context. But where contractions occur in the context of a reference (as on page 10, line 1), we

have usually left them unexpanded because their meaning will become obvious from the information supplied in our explanatory notes.

6. We have silently omitted repetitions of words or phrases, catchwords and any material deemed to have been mistakenly included in the manuscripts.

7. Folio/page breaks are indicated by a vertical line, '|', in the text. In the page margin at the line in which Reid began a new folio or page, the manuscript number is printed together with the folio or page number. There are two types of manuscript numbers in the volume, respectively of these forms: 2131/2/II/14 and 3061/3. The former type always has the first four digits (2131) in common and these are left out in the marginal printing. The manuscript number is followed, after a comma, by an indication of the folio or page number in the original manuscript; in the case of unpaginated manuscripts, we give the folio number and the side – recto 'r' or verso 'v' – of the folio. The folio/page indications should allow the reader to follow the way in which we have arranged the manuscripts that remain from Reid's lectures on politics. As mentioned, Reid often used the same sheet of paper for different purposes, and it has therefore been necessary to divide a number of manuscripts. Conversely, the rejoining of manuscripts that cohered originally has meant that their folios/pages are printed here in an order different from that in which they happen to have been preserved.

8. In the transcriptions of Reid's manuscripts we have added line numbers. These are used for reference to the Textual and Editorial Notes (see points 9 and 10 below). In cases where the line numbers coincide with the manuscript numbers (cf. point 7 above), the line number is not included.

9. Variants in Reid's manuscripts are recorded in the Textual Notes, and these are keyed to the relevant texts using page and line numbers (that is, '18/32' in the Textual Notes refers to p. 18, l. 32 in this volume). In these notes, editorial comment is in italics and Reid's wordings are in roman typeface. Instances where Reid has changed an unfinished text by superimposing a letter or word over what he had originally written, or revised a phrase in the course of his initial writing, have been used in our transcriptions but have *not* been recorded in the Textual Notes. We have also not recorded those instances where Reid has merely gone back and corrected his spelling or grammar, or supplied a missing character or word. Variants are indicated in the following manner. In MS 2131/4/III/3 (p. 32, l. 13 below), for example, Reid initially wrote 'something in the Nature of it', then deleted 'the Nature of', leaving as his final formulation 'something in it'. Reid's change is recorded in the Textual Notes thus: something in it] something in the Nature of it.

Reid often failed to replace deleted material with a new word or phrase. These cancellations have been identified and recorded in the Textual Notes.

In recording Reid's revisions we have made a distinction between insertions and additions. Where Reid has indicated where to place additional material in the text (typically with a '^' symbol below the line) we have used the annotation 'inserted'. Where Reid has not indicated where to place additional material with a symbol, we have used the annotation 'added'.

In ambiguous cases we have specified the revision using the normal convention illustrated above. Where Reid has written his insertion or addition in the margin of the page, we have noted the location of the insertion or addition in our annotation.

10. The Editorial Notes preceding the Textual Notes contain translations of Latin passages, and the details of papers and books Reid quotes from or refers to in his texts. In many cases we have also referred to literature which we have no direct evidence that Reid used, but which we believe is a help to the reader in understanding which subjects Reid was addressing. Detailed commentary on the contents of the manuscripts has been confined to our editorial introduction.

The Editorial Notes are indicated in Reid's texts by asterisks * and are keyed to the texts using the same convention as that employed in the Textual Notes.

Where known, life dates for all figures active prior to 1800 mentioned in the notes to the Introduction and the Editorial Notes are given in the Index of Persons and Titles.

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Introduction

KNUD HAAKONSSSEN AND PAUL WOOD

1. Thomas Reid: The Politics of a North Briton

Dugald Stewart's influential depiction of Thomas Reid as a thinker living 'in the obscurity of a learned retirement', distanced from 'the political convulsions which Europe has witnessed for a course of years', has long masked the fact that throughout Reid's career he was deeply engaged with many of the pressing social, economic and political issues that preoccupied his contemporaries across the Atlantic world. While Stewart was understandably anxious to present Reid's philosophical legacy without reference to the political and cultural conflicts in Britain caused by the French Revolution, Stewart's predicament in Edinburgh at the turn of nineteenth century led him to create a portrait of Reid that does not do justice to the full range of Reid's activities or the scope of his intellectual enterprise.¹ For, as Reid's correspondence reveals, he gave serious thought to matters of social and economic policy at various points during his long career, and he was an active participant in both the anti-slavery movement and the meetings held in Glasgow to express support for the early, moderate phase of the French Revolution. Moreover, the papers we publish in this volume cast Reid in a very different light from that found in Stewart's biography because they illustrate how his responses to the political, economic and social problems confronting Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century were informed by the theoretical ideas that he refined and systematised in the classrooms of King's College Aberdeen and the University of Glasgow.

Reid's mature thinking about politics, the economy and society took shape in the distinctive milieu of the north-east of Scotland. As a boy, he experienced at first hand the political and religious divisions that plagued the north-east, as well as Scotland more generally, in the first half of the eighteenth century. His extended family was split between those loyal to the Hanoverian and Presbyterian settlements and those who were Episcopalians with Jacobite sympathies. His mother, Margaret, was the daughter of David Gregory of Kinnairdy and Gregory's second wife, Isabel Gordon. The offspring of Gregory's first wife, Jean Walker

¹ Dugald Stewart, *Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid* (1803), p. 2. On Stewart's *Account* see Paul Wood, 'The Hagiography of Common Sense: Dugald Stewart's *Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid*'.

were, Reid later recalled, 'torries & Episcopalians', whereas Isabel and her children 'were zealous Presbyterians', like the Reids. The tensions resulting from these conflicting allegiances left a permanent mark on the family and, on occasion, led to somewhat strained relationships between the direct descendants of Gregory's two wives.² Aberdeen was also still scarred by the Jacobite rising of 1715 when in April 1722 Reid was sent to study at the Aberdeen Grammar School before entering Marischal College the following October. The north-east was a hotbed of Jacobitism, with the Old Pretender, James Francis Edward Stuart, being proclaimed as James III and VIII in Aberdeen on 20 September 1715. The patron of Marischal College, the tenth Earl Marischal, George Keith, was one of the leading supporters of the would-be king, and most of those teaching at Marischal and King's came out on the side of the Jacobite cause. Once the rebellion was quashed in 1716, the Hanoverian regime moved swiftly to remove those implicated in the abortive rising. Royal Commissions of Visitation, convened in 1716 and 1717, found that eight of the ten members of King's College and six of the seven members of Marischal were Jacobites. They were all replaced by men loyal to the Hanoverians, and Keith was stripped of his patronage of the college his family had founded.³ The new cadre of regents and professors who lectured at King's and Marischal after the colleges reopened in 1717 effected significant changes to the curricula, which were to prove beneficial to students such as Reid. Reid's regent, George Turnbull, began his brief career at Marischal in 1721 and, over the course of the next six years, did much to transform the teaching of the *cursus philosophicus*. Through Turnbull, Reid was introduced to such canonical writers on politics and natural law as Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf, Richard Cumberland, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, and probably also the works of James Harrington and Old Whigs such as Robert Molesworth.⁴

² See Reid's account of his visit in 1736 to his cousin David Gregory, in Reid to James Gregory, 24 August 1787, in Reid, *Correspondence*, pp. 189–90.

³ On the '15 see Daniel Szechi, *1715: The Great Jacobite Rebellion*. For specific information about Aberdeen, see Alistair Tayler and Henrietta Tayler, *1715: The Story of the Rising*, pp. 52, 128–32; and Kieran German, 'Jacobite Politics in Aberdeen and the '15'.

⁴ On Turnbull's teaching at Marischal College see Paul Wood, *The Aberdeen Enlightenment: The Arts Curriculum in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 40–49. For the graduation thesis Turnbull published when Reid received his MA in 1726 see George Turnbull, *Education for Life: Correspondence and Writings on Religion and Practical Philosophy*, pp. 59–74. See also George Turnbull, *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy* (1740), vol. I, pp. 226–29, on the 'science of politics', and Turnbull's commentary in Johann Gottlieb Heineccius, *A Methodical System of Universal Law: Or, the Laws of Nature and Nations Deduced from Certain Principles, and Applied to Proper Cases* (1738), for an extended exposition of his political principles; cf. the interpretation in Knud Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment*, pp. 85–99.

While Reid studied divinity at Marischal from 1726 to 1731, he was exposed to the political realities of Scottish academic life when he participated in the election of the College Rector. During the late 1720s rectorial elections at Marischal were a microcosm of the struggle for power and influence in the political nation at large between two rival factions of Whigs: the Squadrone, led by the first Duke of Montrose, James Graham, and the first Duke of Roxburghe, John Ker, and the Argathelians, led by the second Duke of Argyll, John Campbell, and his brother Archibald, Lord Ilay. After Marischal reopened in 1717, the Squadrone controlled the college. In 1726, however, the party suffered a reverse when the Argathelian Patrick Duff was elected Rector. In 1729 Reid was chosen as a procurator to represent the student 'nation' of Angus and he voted for the successful Argathelian candidate, Duff's cousin, William Duff of Braco.⁵ During the course of the election, Reid met the local clergyman, the Rev. John Bisset, who was appointed by Reid and his fellow procurators to serve as an assessor alongside the new Rector. We do not know what transpired between Reid and Bisset in 1729, but in 1737 they became bitter antagonists when Reid became entangled in the ecclesiastical politics surrounding the issue of church patronage.

We know almost nothing about Reid's involvement with political and social matters in the years immediately following his departure from divinity school, although a hint of his interest in politics comes in a list of books he apparently wanted to read dating from January 1736, which included the Scottish Catholic historian Thomas Innes' controversial *A Critical Essay on the Ancient Inhabitants of the Northern Parts of Britain, or Scotland* (1729) and a Tory political pamphlet by the Scottish Scriblerian John Arbuthnot.⁶ Willingly or not, Reid was drawn on to the local political stage the following year, when he was presented to the parish of New Machar by King's College Aberdeen.⁷ The issue of who had ultimate control over the appointment of parish ministers in Scotland had become a matter of controversy following the passage of the Act of Patronage of 1712, which restored the right of a patron, rather than the congregation, to install a minister. Initially patrons tended to consult with local presbyteries and parishioners in order to avoid undue conflict, but the right of patrons was insisted on by Robert Walpole's managers of Scotland after 1725, the second Duke of Argyll and

⁵ Roger L. Emerson, *Professors, Patronage and Politics: The Aberdeen Universities in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 45–51; 'Minutes of the Rectorial Elections, Marischal College, 1723–1860', Aberdeen University Library (henceforth AUL), MS M 104, entry for 1 March 1729. The student body at Marischal was divided into four 'nations': Angus, Buchan, Mar and Moray.

⁶ Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 325.

⁷ In what follows we draw on Andrew L. Drummond and James Bulloch, *The Scottish Church, 1688–1843: The Age of the Moderates*, pp. 38–44.